



## **Checklist of Recommended Legislation to Remedy Connecticut's Biggest Environmental Deficiencies**

January 2009

The Council on Environmental Quality reports the status of Connecticut's air, water, land and life every year in *Environmental Quality in Connecticut* (please see [www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport](http://www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport) for the report released in June 2008). The Council also is required by CGS Section 22a-12 to recommend legislation "for remedying the deficiencies of existing programs and activities." On the following page, the Council highlights the biggest such deficiencies and provides a checklist of recommended remedies. Additional information is always available by contacting the Council.





# STATE OF CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Below, the Council highlights important areas where the state is not on track to meet established goals. Though not mentioned explicitly, the Council regards Connecticut's biggest environmental challenge to be directing needed development into cities and towns while avoiding needless destruction of natural resources. This necessary movement toward "Responsible Growth" has very many elements and is the subject of reports from other agencies. The same is true of the movement toward more efficient use of energy in all its forms, an effort that spans all government programs. The recommendations below are aimed at specific gaps in state environmental policy and performance. (*Order does not indicate priority.*)

### STATUS OF MAJOR RESOURCES

(Arrows show percentage of goal achieved as of 2008)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### CLEAN RIVERS, A SOUND ALIVE

60%

Barely on track to meet goals for major rivers and Long Island Sound. Area of the Sound with low oxygen levels has been expanding since 2004.

- ✓ Provide steady capital for Clean Water Fund for municipal grants and loans. (Many municipal projects are shovel-ready, should federal funds become available.) Annual need for state GO bonding is estimated to be \$130 million.

#### FARMLAND

25%

Not on track to meet state farmland preservation goals (but an upturn in preservation is anticipated in 2009).

State agencies provided subsidies for commercial development on 100 acres of prime farmland (2 active farms) since 2006.

- ✓ Fund preservation of 2,500 acres per year. Annual need for state programs is estimated to be \$12 million plus revenue from Community Investment Act.
- ✓ Strengthen statutes that were intended to avoid state subsidies of development on prime farmland.

#### FORESTS, FIELDS AND PARKS

74%

Not on track to meet statutory goals for open space conservation.

There is no comprehensive inventory of preserved lands and natural resources to guide purchases and no-cost acquisitions (such as gifts, developer set-asides, conservation easement donations, corporate tax credits, etc.).

- ✓ Fund high-priority state acquisitions, plus a share of municipal and nonprofit purchases, to achieve total land preservation of 11,000 acres per year. Annual need for state share is estimated to be \$20 million plus revenue from Community Investment Act.
- ✓ Improve Strategy: Enable the DEP to plan open space acquisition based on accurate natural resource and open space inventory data.
  - ✓ Authorize the DEP to assess and coordinate lands preserved through all methods including gifts, developer set-asides, corporate tax credits, etc.
  - ✓ Authorize the DEP to create a voluntary preserved-land reporting system.

#### STATE PARKS

Deficiencies at most parks (Clough-Harbour comprehensive report, 2003).

- ✓ Provide \$15 million per year for capital improvements. (Many park restoration projects are shovel-ready, should federal funds become available).

#### DEP OPERATIONS

Chronic underfunding is documented ([www.ct.gov/ceq](http://www.ct.gov/ceq)); immediate problem is deficit in Environmental Conservation Fund.

- ✓ Create Marine Fishing License, with \$1.2 million new revenue going to Environmental Conservation Fund.

#### GARBAGE EXPORTS AND RECYCLING

50%

Connecticut residents pay to ship hundreds of thousands of tons of waste each year to landfills in other states, and pay environmental fees to those states.

Connecticut under-recycles and is not on track to meet waste management goals.

- ✓ Expand bottle redemption law.
- ✓ Collect fee on waste leaving state (already charged on waste disposed of in-state), with revenue going to Solid Waste Fund to boost municipal recycling.
- ✓ Earmark portion of unredeemed bottle deposits to boost municipal recycling.

#### WETLANDS

Special 2008 CEQ Report (*Swamped*) found that many towns do not comply with statutory requirements for training and for reporting to the DEP. Lack of training results in more wetlands lost ([www.ct.gov/ceq](http://www.ct.gov/ceq)).

The same report concluded that combined wetlands/zoning commissions are less protective of wetlands than separate wetlands commissions.

- ✓ Training: Require every municipal wetlands agency to disclose at hearings and on application forms that it is (or is not) in compliance with training requirements. (Will save acres of wetlands at no new cost.)
- ✓ Reporting: Require and enable the DEP to establish an electronic reporting system to make it easier and cheaper for municipal agencies to file reports.
- ✓ Separate: Require inland wetlands agencies to be separate from zoning commissions.